

Christiansburg Target Worker Testimonies:

Nine accounts of worker abuse at the hands of Store Manager Daniel Butler

Introduction

The following testimonies feature firsthand accounts of both current and former workers at the Target store located in Christiansburg, Virginia which speak to worker abuses incurred both directly and witnessed by the hands of Store Manager Daniel Butler. The abuses include sexual harassment - specifically non-consensual touching and sexual innuendo – as well as derogatory commentary which workers believe were racially-motivated against Black and Latino workers at the store. These are only a portion of workers' experiences regarding Daniel Butler's abusive actions. Many other workers were too intimidated to go on the record to share their experiences due to concerns of retaliation. Other store managers, as well as the district manager, are implicated in the protection of Daniel Butler's actions, preventing any prior attempts of accountability from occurring. Workers are left with no other recourse of action than calling upon the local community to support workers in their efforts at justice. Due to the provided evidence, we demand the immediate termination of Daniel Butler, as well as official recognition from the Target Corporation of our independent workers committee, which will handle all grievances Christiansburg Target workers have regarding the workplace.

Testimony #1

Ten years ago I started what I hoped would be my last job, until retiring. As with all jobs I've had, I gave it 110%. I worked for six years, full time and received full benefits. On the first day, during orientation I was shown an anti-union video. Having worked the previous four years for a company that was unionized, I was very disappointed to see that I would not have this advantage at the new job.

After the first six years things changed. The economy took a hit and it directly affected me. I was dropped to part time and my benefits were taken away, As a senior citizen I was on my own. I stayed dedicated and did not lower my standards as to the quality of my work. I hoped this would gain me more hours on the schedule each week. It didn't happen. Rather than be appreciated for my efforts, I was gradually treated with less and less respect.

Daniel Butler, I would find, had no respect for anyone who worked for him. Within the first month he was in charge every single team leader found excuses to leave or transfer to other stores. Then, as new ones came on, it was only a matter of time before most of them left too. As for the rest of us, having nowhere else to go, we stayed and are continuing to suffer his disregard and abuse.

Most of the young women have confided in me, that he makes them very uncomfortable with inappropriate touching on their backs and makes unacceptable remarks. The young men have also been insulted by this same "man in charge". Racist remarks and gender insults. Crude sexual insults referring to women customers. I've been told all of this, first hand, and in confidence. Virtually no one is comfortable when he is present.

At one point he lost control and grabbed me by the neck to stop me from trying to calmly explain why I didn't move fast enough to help him out. He is sixteen years younger than me and has no regard for seniors either. I have high anxiety every time I go to work. When he grabbed me my supervisor was too intimidated by him and in fear of losing her job to document the event. He still verbally insults me every chance he gets. Some have called our hotline to complain about him and his misbehavior only to have nothing done about it. Hopeless, some of them are now on anti-depression medication.

Some of the best people in charge of my work have been let go, unfairly been told the company needed to "down size" only to be immediately replaced by new hires at a lower pay rate. All in all there's a general bad feeling among most of my co-workers and it's become a dread to work there. Bullying, sexual harassment and physical and mental abuse appears to be the norm in this workplace.

Sadly for me to seek out alternative employment at my age nearing retirement is not an option. I continue to work harder than the company deserves with integrity and defiance. I live for the day when I no longer have to be stressed about going to work in a very unpleasant place. I've worked forty-four years and am looking forward to hopefully witness a big change in the workplace once I'm gone. This kind of disrespect has to stop.

Testimony #2

I was hired as a seasonal cashier. During my first couple of weeks there the shift supervisor as well as the security guard had talked about “a party” for all of the new hires at the general manager’s house. Turns out it was a joke, to try and freak the new people out. The following week I was warned by some other ladies on the sales floor about how much of a creep the manager was, as well as that he could be quite handsy. Soon after he started talking to me before and after my shifts.

At the start of the shifts he would ask about the store cards, and place his hand on my back and rub it gently. This happened every time that he would work. Towards the end of my time there and closer to the holidays, he would stand on the floor and ‘supervise’ the front end. He only greeted the younger female customers and even made derogatory comments about customers that would ask him questions to other guests as well as to other managers there.

More specifically, he was standing up front with another manager and an older lady came up and asked for assistance. He answered her question and then this couple came by and he complained about that woman to them calling her “rude” and “stupid.” I think what makes this whole situation so bad is that other people, including management, is aware of how he is and they do nothing about it, they even joke about it with the new hires.

– Michaela Scott

Testimony #3

While holding an HR position I witnessed and experienced sexual discrimination, racial and sexual orientation discrimination, along with class discrimination. I would attempt to make several reports promptly with my HR supervisor but the fear of Daniel Butler finding out the report(s) would never get completed. During a lunch break, I had a cashier who needed to discuss past hours with me. I told them I would be with them right after break was over to wait at my desk. I knew they were wanting to get a confirmation of their hours because they needed to turn them into CPS for their children's benefits. Daniel Butler ran up to me and in front of the worker waiting said, "I bet she's just trying to get those welfare benefits" and starts nudging me with his arm laughing loudly. My response was "in fact that is what she is needing to discuss". His face grew red and they immediately said "I need you to make five minutes out of your day to discuss this conversation we just had". I did not make that time. He followed me around the store for the rest of my shift but I still never made that time.

He constantly calls out minorities behind their back to the rest of management. While watching the front check lanes, the manager would have what they like to call "mini business lessons". This is where they would have lower management, such as myself, stand at the front with them while they discussed different topics. During one of these meetings he pointed out every cashier who was a minority with his finger. He said "see these people? They don't do their job. They aren't hard working. Why should I pay them equally or even allow them to work here while others appreciate their job more?". I stated that the ones he pointed out were some of the hardest workers we had and they were all crossed trained in different areas. The manager said, "if they don't work hard for me, what good are they?"

During a front check lane management shift, we were pushing store cards because our numbers were down. I witnessed him struggling to talk with one of the cleaning crew members. This gentleman was Hispanic. Butler called our only Hispanic cashier over to "translate". He was trying to push a credit card on the cleaning crew member without explaining to him the details of the program. He became frustrated when he found out the gentleman was here on a work visa and could not receive one. Later after the man had left, Butler approached myself and three other cashiers. He said, "Damn, I was hoping we could get at least eight cards since he's here illegally and probably has multiple social security numbers". One of the cashiers who was in the group ran directly to HR. He followed the cashier to make sure no report of the incident was made. The report was never made.

During my third interview for an HR position, he asked who I was currently dating. He asked "what's his last name? Do you live with him? Why haven't I met him? I don't live with anyone or dating anyone. I guess I'm going to die alone" After asking these questions I asked what this had to do with my interview and he said "I just need to meet him to approve for you". I was sexually harassed and publicly humiliated on several different occasions. During a morning huddle of a major holiday, we had over 20 management and team members attending, Butler awkwardly announced the amount of weight I had lost and that I needed to get in the middle for everyone to see. Another incident, I was writing the daily line up on a whiteboard. He approached me, ran his hand from my elbow to my shoulder moving the sleeve of my blouse. He said "I just want to see your tattoo". When he found out that I was an atheist, he would find moments to discuss his beliefs and how I needed to believe that "God was watching over me with a plan". He made my HR position so difficult, I searched for different employment. Reports were never made due to fear of him finding out. When reports were made, he would find out. He would purposely seek out the workers who had made the report and follow them around the store during their shift. He would call them in his office to "discuss the matter". Butler makes the work place a hostile work environment for the majority of his employees especially minorities.

Testimony #4

I've been an employee at this store for a couple of years and thought it'd be a great place to work. It is for the most part, except for a couple of complaints here and there about hours or small typical issues. However, the reason I have started to dread going in to work every day is because of the Daniel Butler.

First of all, since my first week at this store, I was told by various workers that he generally made uncomfortable remarks to women and racist comments. And also that I should never bother to report this behavior to our company hotline, because in the past other workers had to no avail. His district manager had supposedly gotten wind of this from corporate and then told the general manager about the complaint which implicated a worker. From the story I was told, that worker was either fired or quit.

Also around the time I started working, I witnessed people in extreme distress over him. Friends told me that HR workers would go home crying and anyone who stood up to him would start getting ludicrous reports written up about them and were fired. Even workers that had been there for years were pushed out and replaced with younger workers in the name of company "downsizing." Since working there, I would witness or be told by other workers that the manager would "lightly" punch, slap, grab, or even hold onto subordinates. Personally, I experienced this man grabbing onto my shoulders and staring me down just to tell me something almost insignificant. I was able to shrug that off mostly and avoided him as much as possible over the years. Recently though, I feel like I'm in a hostile work environment whenever he's around.

I can't give many details, in order to keep some confidentiality, but there was more trouble between the manager and I than just unwanted touches. I definitely feel like his remarks and jokes are what make me feel the worst. His unwanted compliments are what have bothered me for a long time. He'll always make a point to tell me if he thinks I'm looking attractive on a particular day, which may seem harmless to some, but it would always make me very uncomfortable. He'd call me "Venus" and I didn't appreciate that, but laughed it off.

Recently I came into work and he made sexually suggestive comments regarding my relationship with another coworker. I jokingly asked him to stop after he kept pressing the matter. Later, he again made comments insinuating my sexual relationship with my coworker in front of several superiors. I walked away at that point telling him to stop, trying to just shrug it off. Sparing the details, I went to HR for help and they did nothing, telling me that Butler didn't know how a woman could get that meaning out of his comments. The next day he also told me that he was just trying to fit in with the guys. So, I'm pretty pissed and I avoid him like Hell.

- Anonymous Worker

Testimony #5

I worked at this store part-time and full-time during my employment. Since working there I have witnessed, as well as heard, various issues with Daniel Butler. These include sexual harassment, racist comments, unfair treatment to workers, misogyny, and aggressive/harassing management work style.

A couple of instances come to mind that that I will share. I was working 6am one morning. I had gone to customer service after I had put the sale signs up for the front end of the store. Butler was discussing the store card with one of the employees of the cleaning crew. The cleaning crew is an independent company, contracted by our store. The man was not fluent in English and seemed to have a tough time understanding him, as he explained the store card. He ended up having my coworker help the man go through the store card application process at Guest Services. My coworker told me that he had been aggressively pursuing and trying to persuade the employee of the cleaning crew about the store card. But the cleaning crew worker did not know his social security number, so he could not apply for the store card. When Butler later questioned my coworker about the application, he told him that the cleaning crew employee didn't have his social security number. However, he had explained he'd bring his social security card the next day. Butler's response to this was "Then you should have asked him for his five other social security numbers." Not only is this extremely unprofessional as a general manager, but also, it's extremely racist, as he's insisting the cleaning crew worker was an illegal immigrant.

My coworker and I were clocking in. As soon as Butler came through the office, he put his hand on my coworker's shoulder. He proceeded to lift the shirt of her arm up, and asked "Is that a tattoo?!" She yank her shirt down and said "No, that is a bruise." He then told her how pretty she looked that day. This made my coworker extremely uncomfortable, as it did for anyone who was in the room, including myself.

Next, a coworker and I were working on the sales floor redoing sale signs that we had been asked to do. My coworker went back to the printer in the backroom to print more signs. As he was having trouble with the printer Butler walked into the room. My coworker asked him if he could help him fix the issue with the printer. Butler responded "you should know how to do this better than me, you're Asian," after my coworker asked for help. Again, another racist comment that should not be tolerate in a workplace, nor anywhere else.

I have had issues with Butler aggressively and wrongfully accusing me. No other manager at our store harassed and questioned any team member for calling out of work. At the most they would ask when you think you could work next, and sometimes if you could call a couple coworkers to ease the process of calling out. All of those are extremely reasonable, depending on the situation. I've called in sick before and Butler has answered. He has accused me of being hungover, of not being sick, or lazy. In general he's questioned me and persuade me to come in, even if I was sick and had a doctor's note.

During the last few months I worked there, I'd be given a list of things I needed to do during the work day. This did not include the responsibilities that every sales floor member has: going to the front if your called, assist guests, and do other work related to your designated section. There were various occasions that he would come up to me and become angry with me because I hadn't gotten through all the tasks on my list. He would also accuse me about my speed. Once he even made a

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comment about my weight and another coworkers weight, as he referred to us as the “big boys.”

Another instance that comes to mind was an afternoon in 2015, when I had shown him what tasks I had completed. We were in the HR desk, before I clocked out and left for my other job. I had already gone 45 minutes over from when my shift was supposed to end. He told me I needed to stay and finish the rest of the list, even though I told him my next job was in 30 mins. He shook his head and told me I needed to work “more efficiently,” even though we had two call outs on sales floor that day. These types of things happened a lot, where instead of coaching me, he would yell at me. Due to the low amount of workers on the floor, and scheduling conflicts, these occurrences with Butler would take a mental toll on me. I had two breakdowns in the electronics stock room due to personal stress and work stress, partially due to him. When he talked to me like this it would increase my anxiety and make me panic. This is not how you treat your employees.

During my course at this store I was made aware that if you were a member of the LGBTQ+ community, you were protected by the store if you received harassment based on your sexual orientation. To do this, I was advised to go into my store profile on the computer and check the box in my personal info for LGBTQ. I did so, since I’m gay. Later down the road I had to update my address in the computer and found that my box was unchecked. I rechecked it, only to find out later that it was unchecked again. This happened three different times since 2014.

– Elliott Williams

Testimony #6

The store manager, and by extension all leadership at the store, was unable to make me feel comfortable as either a worker or a trans person. I tried to bring up the fact that I was transgender with an HR manager during what was basically intake, only to be sidelined with a “put your sex as whatever you want.” This would have been fine except for the fact that I was consistently misgendered the entire time I was there, with other employees making inappropriate inquiries about my body and life.

Never once did this manager take up for me, nor did anyone else. I felt incredibly unwelcome and dysphoric and felt frequently that I was being condescended to when I brought up discomfort about being scheduled outside my requested (and agreed to) hours, the store manager told me that “not getting a lot of sleep was good for a girl like me”. Other employees seemed consistently uncomfortable around him and the perception was that he was not a friendly man. When I tried to be friendly to him, he seemed standoffish, telling me that he had worked at this job a long time. I don't think they held to the store's alleged principles, and I think that he was not a manager people felt safe around.

– Emil Morris

Testimony #7

I first started working at the store when I was 17. One day Daniel Butler decided to give the cashier who sales the most store cards a gift. I had the most store card sales that day so he asked me to meet him in the break room. I saw that he was alone in the break room so I asked another manager to accompany me real quick. He gave me a gift card to a restaurant.

The next few days at work he asked me who I was going to take with me out to dinner with my gift card. I told him my sister. He told me that if my sister canceled her plans with me, he would happily take me to the restaurant, just the two of us. He brought this idea up at least two more times. He was upset when he found out I went with my family to the restaurant, instead of him. Also, since that day he would walk by my register and touch my lower back and whisper things like “you’re my favorite cashier” in my ear. This was something he would do from time to time the two years I worked at the store.

I didn’t like him touching my lower back and I always jerked away from him when he would do that. There was another time where he walked by my register and asked when I was planning on taking my lunch break. I told him, and found him waiting in the break room, alone. I decided to go shopping for groceries but I found that he followed me out there and walked behind me while I shopped for groceries. Every time I looked behind me he was looking at me, he was still at a considerable distance though. For the two years I worked there, that’s pretty much the only thing I can say about him.

– Anonymous Worker

Testimony #8

I worked at this store for over five years, part time at first and eventually full time through the years. I was promoted into an office/behind the scenes position and dealt frequently with the management and Daniel Butler. One evening during the last month I was full time I was in the team member area working.

Butler asked if I would help watch the front while an assistant manager went on break. He made the comment he would be up there too but, "It's always good to have two eyes out there, even if the other is a women." I reported him to HR Corporate a week or so later. Despite reporting this, the corporate management never followed up with me or provided assistance with my grievance. It showed me they didn't take the issue seriously.

– Anonymous Worker

Testimony #9

When I began working for this store it was normal for Daniel Butler to touch me whenever he talked to me. It began with a hand shake and progressed to a hand on my shoulder. A few conversations later it progressed further to a hand on my lower back which stayed there until he was called away or the conversation ended. He continued to touch me during every conversation until I stood up for myself by simply moving away, but then he would inch closer. I eventually told him to stop outright, saying that it made me uncomfortable.

After this, I started to get write ups. The managers started to target me out of the others on the team. Butler was pulled away from our work station and I was left to do his duties for months. When the time came for a promotion it was given to someone else because I was 'too confrontational'.

He knew where I lived, and when I was snowed in he would not accept a 'call out' and he came to get me. It was extremely uncomfortable, and I feel as if it infringed on my privacy. This has happened every year since I started working there.

Call outs at this store are not accepted. I have been too sick to go to work for fear of infecting customers and told over the phone by tButler that if I did not come in I would be written up.

I had come in on my day off to pick up my paycheck and was waiting for a manager to retrieve it when Butler came up to me, lifted up my shirt to my bra, and asked if he could see my new tattoo. I saw the people around me looking at me, with his hand on my shirt and my shirt pulled almost all the way up, and could do nothing but tell him about my new tattoo for fear of losing my job

When new people come to work at this store I sometimes help in training them. For every new person that is female I warn them to stay away from Butler because he has a tendency to touch women inappropriately and make them feel uncomfortable. I do this so that the new people might not quit as quickly as most do. 9 times out of 10 these new people come back to me saying, "I know exactly what you mean."

I have been screamed at by him. I have backed away from him in fear of his anger. He is out spoken with every emotion and expresses his anger in inappropriate ways. It is generally terrifying to work for him on his 'bad days'.

During the course of my employment I know of two people that have been fired for nonsensical things due to the fact that they made too much money hourly for their position. Meaning that they had worked for the store long enough to get yearly raises that made their rate of pay higher than anyone else in the same position.

At this store you may not go over 40 hours, I've been told it's because the time that you work over 40 hours comes out of Butler's yearly bonus and it will make him angry if you go over.